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J. Scott Trubey (/authors/j-scott-trubey) | The Atlanta Journal-Constitution | March 27, 2019 3:00 PM, EDT

Norfolk Southern Breaks Ground on Atlanta HQ

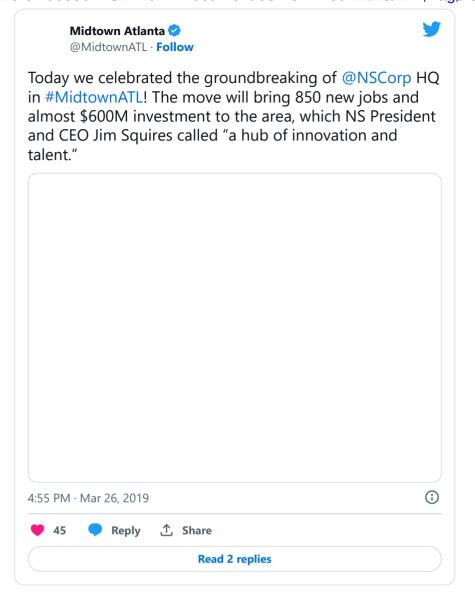


Gene J. Puskar/Associated Press

Railroad giant Norfolk Southern held a ceremonial turning of dirt March 26 to mark construction of the company's new Midtown Atlanta headquarters, but the process of moving personnel from Virginia to Atlanta already is underway.

Chairman and CEO Jim Squires said more than 300 railway dispatchers have transferred to Midtown from elsewhere in Norfolk Southern's network, and the company expects to move its first wave of about 100 corporate staff to Atlanta this summer.

Squires said Atlanta is a global logistics hub and a critical node for the railroad's network. Corporate functions were divided between Georgia and Virginia, and decision-makers needed to be in one place, he said.



Data analytics and machine learning are altering the way the company moves freight, he said, and Norfolk Southern wants to tap into Georgia Tech and the city's technology talent.

"Many people associate freight railroads with a past industrial era," Squires said. "But the trains going down our tracks today operate on technology that is as advanced and sophisticated as any industry anywhere."

Squires said an additional 400 corporate employees will move to Atlanta when Norfolk Southern's \$575 million headquarters opens in the third quarter of 2021. NS has more than 2,000 workers in Atlanta, and the relocation will increase that figure by 850.

Norfolk Southern formally announced its pick of Atlanta in December. Invest Atlanta, the city's development arm, that month approved \$23.6 million in incentives for the new tower. State tax credits for newly created jobs will add millions more.



The skyline of Midtown Atlanta where Norfolk will build its new headquarters.. (David Goldman/Associated Press)

Gov. Brian Kemp and Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms took turns praising the city and state's cooperation in making the relocation happen.

The recruitment started a few years ago during the tenure of Gov. Nathan Deal when the city, state and developer CIM Group began discussing a plot of Norfolk Southern land in the Gulch, the weedy tangle of downtown parking lots and rail beds near Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

There, CIM plans to build a mini-city of office towers, apartments, hotels and retail. The project could grow to \$5 billion.

"So much of what we've done in the past year has been about redeveloping our city," Bottoms said after the ceremony. "When you bring corporate headquarters like Norfolk Southern to our city, we know they will bring c-suite jobs to the folks who will work in the mail room."

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